

Town of Arlington
Office of the Town Clerk
Massachusetts Avenue
Arlington, MA 02476



Tel: 781-316-3070
Fax: 781-316-3079

The State Primary is on Tuesday, September 1, 2020.

We will update this FAQ regularly, so we may have added new information you are looking for. We also urge you to wait to call the office until after August 12th to give us time to work on mailing ballots out.

Some of the details will change for the General Election in November and will update this FAQ with new information in September.

What is a primary?

A primary allows voters to choose the person from each party who will be on the ballot for the general election. There may not be multiple candidates for every race and party. If you are registered in a party, you can only receive that ballot. If you are unenrolled (sometimes referred to as an independent voter) then you choose which party's primary to vote in. Voting in a primary does not change your registration from unenrolled to that party.

If an unenrolled voter does not select a party on the application we cannot send a ballot. We will keep the application and send a ballot in November if that box was checked. If there is a phone number on the application we can try to call to confirm the party.

If a voter did not indicate that they wanted a ballot in November, the State will mail a follow up postcard to be sure that everyone has the opportunity to vote. You do not have to return the postcard if you don't want to Vote by Mail.

What is the difference between Vote by Mail and Absentee Voting?

If you regularly vote Absentee because of your health or you spend part of the year out of Arlington, you should continue to do that. If you filled out the Absentee Ballot Application, a 2020 Vote by Mail application or the postcard from the state, we will mail you a ballot in early August. If you would like [more information about absentee voting](#), the state webpage has more details.

The state created Early Voting by Mail for elections this year so that's why we have two different forms; Absentee voters will keep using the same system. The basic steps and the ballots are the same. The Vote by Mail application is simpler, so most people use that if they want to vote by mail.

What are the rules for voting by mail?

The most important rule is that you must SIGN all forms and the envelope that you put your ballot in to return it. You do not need any excuse for voting by mail for the rest of this year. Traditional absentee voting requires you to meet the criteria, but that does not apply to this election.

Can I find out if my application has been received?

If you use the Secretary of State's website tool [Track My Ballot](#), you will see Pending status if we have entered your application. We are entering hundreds every day, but it may be a few more days until we have finished processing all the applications.

When will I get my ballot in the mail?

Ballots will be mailed starting August 6th. It may take several days to get all the ballots mailed so please give our office and the post office some time to get them to you.

How do I Vote by Mail?

When the large envelope arrives it will contain a white envelope addressed to the Town Clerk, your ballot, a smaller envelope to hold the completed ballot, and instructions for how to vote.

This is a simple checklist:

1. Complete your ballot
2. Place ballot in the smaller ballot envelope
3. Sign and print your name (there is no excuse needed)
4. Provide the home address where you are registered (even if you got the ballot at a different address)
5. Put the ballot envelope in the return envelope
6. Deposit in the US Mail (postage is paid) or in a ballot drop box

How do I return my ballot?



You can mail it to the Clerk's Office (postage is paid) or use one of the three secure ballot return boxes. Before you put a ballot in a box, please be sure it is clearly marked for ballots.

- East Arlington - Outside the Fox Branch Library (175 Massachusetts Ave)
- Arlington Center - In front of Town Hall (on the lower plaza)
- Arlington Heights - Outside ACMI Studios (85 Park Avenue)

Can I check to see if you have mailed my ballot?

When we start mailing the ballots, you will also be able to see the date that we mail the ballot to you and then the date we receive your completed ballot using the Secretary of State's website tool [Track My Ballot](#). Please give the post office a few days before calling our office.

Do you really need all the envelopes?

Yes. They all have a purpose in a complicated system of tracking and sorting the ballots.

What is the deadline to return my ballot?

For the September 1 State Primary you must return your ballot by the close of polls on Election Day. A postmark is NOT sufficient. A drop box will be more reliable after August 25th. If possible, put your ballot in a secure drop box early on Election Day so we have time to sort them. Ballots collected at 8 pm must be carried to 8 different polling locations and the election workers must sit and wait for them.

What is Early Voting?

Early voting is mandated for state elections and allows you to come in person to Town Hall for several days leading up to the election and complete a ballot and seal it in an envelope just as if you were voting by mail. The hours are on the [Election Calendar](#) but the dates are August 22 to August 28 for the State Primary. Details for the November General Election will be announced in October.

When are ballots counted?

Ballots received by the Clerk (through the mail, collected from ballot drop boxes, or during early voting) are sorted by precinct, logged as received so voters can check the status of their ballot ([track my ballot online](#)), and then stored until Election Day. Ballots sealed in envelopes are opened on Election Day by the poll workers and fed into the voting machines. No ballots are counted in advance.

The Early Vote by Mail law allows Clerks the option of running ballots through the voting machines before Election Day, but we will not be doing that for the September 1st primary and will explore whether we can manage that for the November election.

Can I vote at the polls on Election Day?

Yes. We have eight polling locations open on Election Day. There will be regular sanitizing during the day, plastic shields between voters and election workers and we will provide you with a mask if you would like. It is much safer when everyone covers their nose and mouth and we ask you to understand that some people cannot wear a mask or face covering and wear one if you can to protect them at the polls.

Who are the candidates?

If you want to know who will be on your ballot, you need to know your precinct number. [Property Search](#): Enter your address to find your polling location, street sweeping schedule, Trash/Recycling route, and more.

Races on the ballot for the State Primary

Senator in Congress (US Senate - statewide)

Representative in Congress (US House, Fifth District)

Councillor ([Governor's Council](#), Third District)

Senator in General Court (State Senator, Fourth Middlesex)

Register of Probate (Middlesex County – manages [Probate & Family Court](#))

This race depends on your precinct:

Representative in General Court (State Representative, 23rd or 24th Middlesex)

Precincts 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13 – 21 are 23rd Middlesex

Precincts 2, 4, 8, 10, 12 are 24th Middlesex

The state elections website shows the [candidates by party](#).